

Mexico's Food Problem Will Be Difficult to Solve

Dissolution of the Armed Forces Is Only Way to Get Peons Back to the Soil in War-Ridden Country—Corn and Beans the Chief Sustenance of the Poorer Population—Wheat in the Form of Flour Is a Luxury—Last Year's Crops Harvested by the Military Chiefs, but No Planting Done for This Year—Proceeds From Exported Products Used to Buy Arms and Ammunition in the United States for the Factions Instead of Food—A Difficult Situation.



GEN. DOMINGO ARRIETA.
Bandit chief of Durango, who failed to plant crops.

BY CHARLES M. PEPPER.

CORN and beans are the Mexican problem of today. With sufficient supplies of these products assured, something may be done toward solving the greater problem of decent government for Mexico. Without them no progress can be made, for hungry people are unreasonable people when it comes to being governed.

Other food supplies, of course, are important, yet they are not indispensable. There are some people in Mexico, or there used to be some, who indulge in the luxury of wheat in the form of bread, but they are, or were, the minority. The peon population subsists very largely on corn in various forms. The sight of the natives making tortillas is the most familiar one throughout the length and breadth of the land. The picture is always a simple one, for the process of making the tortilla is simplicity itself. Corn in other forms is also provided

The hot tamales are well known to travelers, who find them as palatable as does the native population. Wrapped in the corn husks, they are easily carried about. Many a day's journey in the interior regions is made with only the tamales as provender, and its sustaining qualities are quite remarkable. Beans, usually known as frijoles, are hardly less common than corn, but they are in the nature of a secondary food. One can make a meal on frijoles alone, but after a second or third meal the same old appetite palls, while with the tortillas or tamales it is satisfied but not satiated. The tortillas, in their undeviating regularity and popularity, are like the corn bread of many households. Meat, contrary to a common impression, is not unknown to the peon population. The beef on the ranches sometimes found its way to the humblest peon cabin. Villa, in his bandit roamings, used to appropriate cattle without, as he said, asking permission, and often the poor peons would share in the beef supply; but these occasions were not frequent. Fowls sometimes were had and especially the turkey known as guajolote. This is served with a sort of hot mustard sauce. If the turkey is tough the sauce helps to disguise the toughness.

Chile con carne, that is, hashed meat with pepper, is also known to the peons as well as to the tourists and travelers. But this food, and the other foods of meat, usually are partaken of only on special occasions, such as the fairs, holiday celebrations and weddings. The peon never has been able to have meat in any form as a regular diet.

The wheat raised in Mexico and the flour imported, or was, consumed by the town population. Few of the families have bread themselves. As in all the Latin American countries, they depend on the bakeries for their supplies.

Out in the country there were, of course, no bakeries, and had there been there would have been no demand for them. Unless they sacrificed their favorite pulque drink, but pulque was much cheaper than bread anyhow, and the peon could not afford to give it up. The peon never has been able to have meat in any form as a regular diet. The wheat raised in Mexico and the flour imported, or was, consumed by the town population. Few of the families have bread themselves. As in all the Latin American countries, they depend on the bakeries for their supplies.

short the government would remit the tariff duties on corn and wheat, and enough would flow in from the United States to supply the deficiency. The simplicity of the peon's diet is one explanation of the ease with which revolutionary troops could keep the field. With a sufficient supply of corn at hand the commissary department was not a bothersome question. In the first year or two of the revolution none of the different armies had such a thing as a commissary department of their own. The women traveled along to cook the corn, which was obtained by the simple method of taking it and serving their particular man. This often made the camp followers more numerous than the troops themselves, but it was a necessary evil. After the capture of Torreón, Villa got his troops into something like a regular army organization, and a commissary department was part of the organization. Other generals did the same, but not so well as Villa. With the organization of a commissary, tinned goods were introduced, but not on a large scale. The peon soldiers were not used to them and preferred their corn and beans.

Observers in Mexico at the time when the Washington administration was backing Carranza and Villa, under the delusion that after Huerta was ousted they would work for the common good of Mexico, knew that an economic crisis due to the lack of food would arise before any semblance of stable government could be established and be prepared to meet the scarcity of food.

Overlooking the actual agricultural conditions was one of the miscalculations made by the administration in the idea that the ousting of Huerta in some mysterious way would mean consoling the country.

The leading fact about the revolution was that the revolutionists were able to keep the country for a certain length of time. The Diaz regime went out and Madero's ill-fated regime came in without there having been any serious interruption of the crops. In most sections the planting was done in season, and when the arms and ammunition supplied the revolutionary factions through the benevolence of Washington, enabled the military movement to be made there was no lack of corn, beans and wheat to feed the troops and leave something for the civilian population.

When the revolutionists came into control the crop prospects diminished. The revolution proceeded on the theory that crops could be reaped without having been planted.

The crops which had been planted during the interregnum were harvested during the interregnum, but during peace conditions, yet they were gathered. But the triumphant revolutionary chiefs paid little attention to sowing. They could gather in what others had sown, and there their economic capacity ended.

I was in the state of Durango, which is rich agriculturally, as well as in minerals. Just a year ago, and the black prospect for all Mexico was brought vividly before me. Durango for a year had been in control of the Arrieta brothers and their bandit army. They were the champions of constitutionalism.

A sort of bandit state socialism had been established. The owners of the great haciendas, or estates, had been driven into exile or murdered, but before the triumph of the bandit army the crops had been put in, and under the dictatorship of Domingo Arrieta, the more forceful of the brothers, these were harvested and supplied to the troops, with a certain share for the Arrietas and their subordinates. The crops, therefore, were not lost, though the rake-off was large. The revolutionists of the Arrietas. They were also handled very wastefully, and there was little storage of grain for future use.

The point which impressed me, however, was that practically no planting

was being done, notwithstanding it was the season of planting. It is not astonishing, therefore, to learn that this year Durango rich lands are yielding very little in the way of crops.

The state of Jalisco, the richest agricultural section in Mexico, with corn and wheat fields that rival the Mississippi valley, up to that time had not been materially despoiled. Gen. Huerta was in control there, and except in spots there had not been military successes for the insurgents. All of the revolutionary leaders were looking on it with greedy eyes. When Huerta was driven out of Mexico and his army went to pieces, the revolutionary chiefs swept down on Jalisco. The crops were the legitimate spoils of war, and it could not be held against the revolutionists that they appropriated the harvest. Having done this they failed to plant for the coming season, and so Jalisco, with its means of feeding a large part of Mexico, this year is not able to feed itself.

There is still a good deal of beef in the shape of live cattle in northern Mexico. Notwithstanding the frequent raids on the ranches in Sonora and Chihuahua, there has been no wholesale destruction of the animals. Many ranch owners, in one way and another, managed to get part of their cattle across the line into the United States, but this made no serious inroads on the herds.

Villa and the other revolutionary chiefs, for their own purposes, have done all they could to prevent the destruction of cattle. There is a very good profit for Villa and his friends in the packing house which he has established at Chihuahua, nominally in the name of the state. Though beef, as a steady diet, is out of the reach of the peons, it does not seem quite the thing that when hunger is stalking abroad Villa's packing house should be shipping meat products for sale in the United States.

Notwithstanding the ravages of the revolution the production of commod-

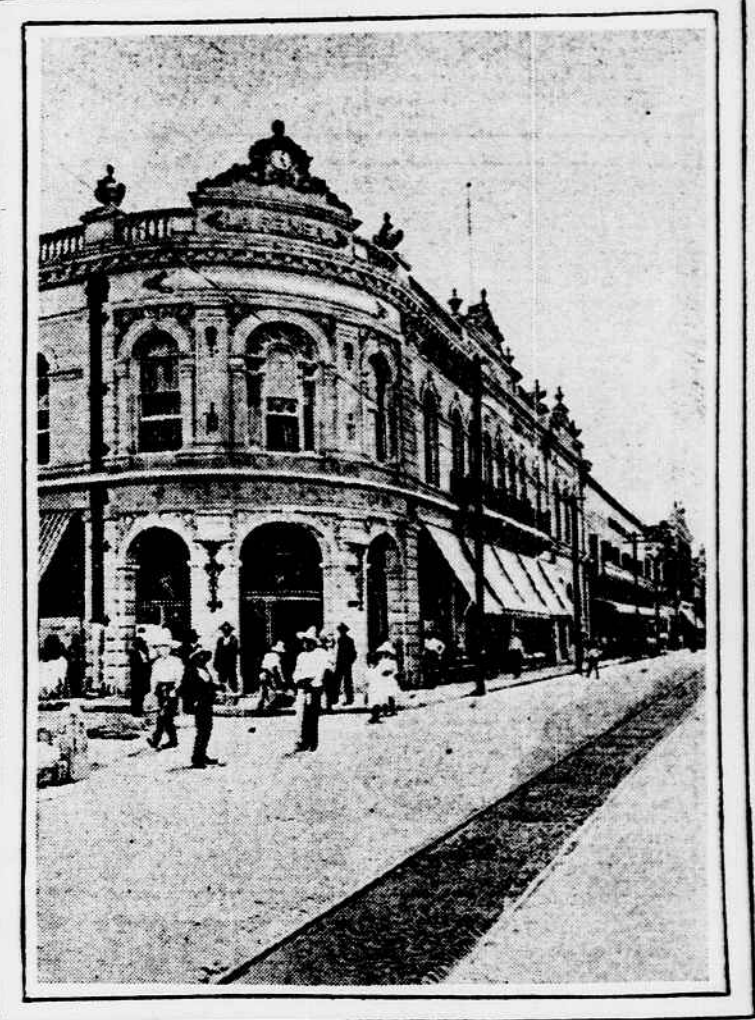
ities which Mexico ships abroad, and which would enable her to buy food supplies, has not been completely stopped.

Sugar and cotton production have been curtailed until there is little for export. Shipments of bullion have suffered severely not only because of the interference with the operation of the mines and smelters, but also because of the increase in the export duties. Nevertheless, some mineral products have gone out, and one faction or the other has had the revenue from them. Most of the revenue has gone to Villa, because he has been in control of the border and mining sections.

The oil fields of Tampico have not been entirely idle for any length of time. The royalty from them is large, and so far Carranza has been able to control it.

It will be seen, therefore, that Mexico is still selling enough of her products abroad to enable her to buy food for her people. Instead of doing this, the various military factions which control the exports of these products are using the proceeds to buy arms and ammunition in the United States at the very high prices resulting from the European war, while the people of the United States are contributing food supplies in order to keep the Mexicans from starving.

With the armed factions ranging over the country the prospect for Mexico feeding herself soon is discouraging. The peon's land hunger was a real one, and had much to do with the revolution, yet the peon does not seem to be in a hurry to satisfy that hunger, or else he is incapable of freeing himself from the overlordship of his military chief. Both causes contribute to the situation.



BUSINESS BLOCK IN MONTERREY, WHERE RED CROSS FOOD SUPPLIES WERE LOADED.

There is a large element in the troops of Villa and Carranza and Obregon and Zapata, and the other chiefs, which prefers the life of the soldier with little disciplinary restraint to that of the peaceful industry. The opportunities for loot and pillage are becoming exhausted, with the exhaustion of the country itself and the growing poverty, yet even in these circumstances the means of getting a living are easier than by doing a hard day's work in planting and weeding and reaping.

Notwithstanding all the idealism that was claimed for the revolutionists, the bandit element which rejects hard work was one of the conspicuous sources of the military successes of Villa and the other chiefs. These bandit soldiers, whether peons of the country or cut-throats from the towns, are not concerned for peaceful industry. They will do nothing to change their present mode of life.

It is hardly conceivable, however, that all the peons are so fond of military service. When Gen. Luis Blanco achieved some military successes in the state of Tamaulipas, more than a year ago, it was cited as evidence of the land hunger of the peons that after his troops won he could not keep them intact. A plan of subdivision of the land had been worked out, and a number of the peon soldiers settled themselves on the subdivided tract and refused to renew the struggle. There is no evidence that since then they have concerned themselves about whether Villa or whether Carranza control.

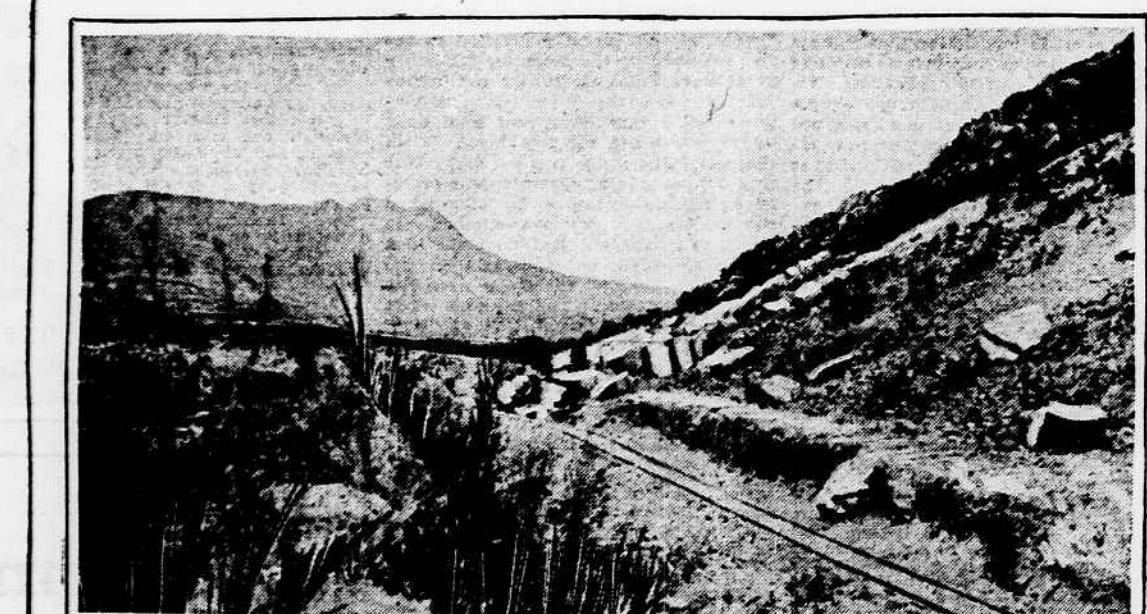
In other sections of Mexico the same state of affairs has been reported. The peons have been so successful in their struggle to get back on the land and remain there that the military chiefs have either driven them off or so terrorized them that they would be compelled to rejoin the army. This is the policy of all the military chiefs. As their ranks are thinned they seek recruits by making peaceful agricultural life impossible. With no chance of peaceful industry, the peons are bound to join one or other of the armed factions.

The vital question in Mexico today is not that of a coalition of the so-called best elements to run the government under the patronage of the United States. It is a question of getting the peons back to the soil. The time is passing when crops can be put in for next year's harvest, and if this is not done it means a hungry Mexico a year from today just as today.

The dissolution of the armed forces of the rival chieftains is the only way of getting the peons back to the soil. It is a gigantic task, which has been made more difficult because of the encouragement that the military chiefs heretofore have had from Washington, but if a fair proportion of the military arms can be put back to tilling the land Mexico's other problems can be worked out.



CATHEDRAL OF DURANGO.



RAILROAD BLOCKED BY BOWLDERS NEAR ZACATECAS.

Warring Nations Will Need Good Standing Will Have Opportunities in Europe After Great Conflict Comes to a Close.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PARIS, June 3, 1915.

NY good American boy can marry a European heiress.

So spoke an American titled lady in Paris.

"He does not need to be well off or socially important," she continued. "But he must be hard and good, capable of learning to run a business or an estate. Such boys have only to get ready. They will be called on after the war."

She showed me newspaper clippings.

I read:

"San Remo, May 5.—The Italian authorities at Parma have stopped a distinguished-looking woman who traveled on the principal railroad lines. Approaching marriageable men, she asked for their cards, in order to propose them to her suitors. She had a choice of nationalities, after the war."

I read:

"Berlin (Telegraph), May 21.—The matchmakers address innumerable offers of marriages, emanating principally from widows of officers and soldiers, and giving statements of fortune. Such offers follow immediately the publication of lists of killed in war. The Berlin paper demand that a stop be put to the scandal. Such widows compete disloyally with young girls."

I read from the Paris Journal:

"This morning I had the surprise to

hear the regimental postmaster call my name. How describe my joy? Is there, then, in all France, some one who takes an interest in me, to whom I can write?"

The titled American explained: "It is the letter of an 'alone' young French combatant, written to his brand-new godmother, who is not at all an old lady, as you might imagine. The Journal alone has furnished 25,000 such godmothers, mostly marriageable girls or their mammas, or both."

I read from the Paris Matin:

"To the Editor.—Our only son has fallen on the field of honor. Will you give us another?"

Here is a war adoption.

"All sweetly sad, worthy of all respect," said the American great lady. "What if marriageable girls godmother unknown combatants? Flaming with patriotism, they do not recognize their own hearts' call. What if little girls of twelve write letters to their 'killing soldiers'? What if widows feel bereft twice over? Between the cities and the armies fly millions of pious valentines—with bundles of underwear, handkerchiefs of food, wine and toilet comforts tied to them. Alas! a million never reach! The brave boys are cut down. From the cities goes the cry for males, the scramble for men. They hardly know it."

American girls, can you imagine the situation? Those who, accustomed to being courted, have men to throw away? Estimates based on the last census show that in the United States there are 45,000,000 males to 46,700,000 females. American girls, big and little, have 2,000,000 men to select.

Europe, even before the war, was just the opposite.

Germany had an excess of nearly 1,000,000 females; Austria-Hungary, 1,100,000; France, 900,000 girls too many; Great Britain an excess of 1,200,000 fair ones, and Italy about 700,000. Which made a total of 5,000,000 European girls who might not hope to marry.

Old Maids' day (St. Catherine's) was already a pathetic date in Paris. The sewing girls of the Rue de la Paix distributed over the boulevard, at noon, carrying bouquets. When men asked them who the flowers were for, they answered: "For St. Catherine, unless—"

"Just unless," sighed the American titled one. "It meant unless some

The Sunday Star's Special Correspondent in Paris Points Out Where Americans of Good Standing Will Have Opportunities in Europe After Great Conflict Comes to a Close. The Dearth of Bridegrooms—Families Adopt Soldiers to Take Places of Their Sons Who Have Been Killed in War—The Boy Scout Movement—French Heiresses Will Be Forced to Go Unmarried Unless America Supplies Men, Says Heilig.

miraculous marriage turned up for her. They were girls without a dot or marriage portion."

A girl spoke up—one whom we call Diana, because she is a little different from the good men to study philosophy at the Sorbonne.

"I hate Old Maids' day," said Diana. "Last year a grocery clerk called out to me. 'She'll find a husband easy.' A lot of painters answered. 'She's engaged already.' While a red-headed man bawled: 'Two francs an hour to hunt a husband.'"

Now, European girls with money have to face it.

War, up to the present, has taken 2,000,000 men, killed, wounded, missing. The wounded, killed, who are fit, return to be killed or wounded again. If the war continues six months more they calculate 13,000,000 killed, mutilated or permanently invalidated by sickness and privations.

"One-arm men of good family are at a premium," said the lady of title.

An American trained nurse looked in.

"Around the hospitals of France alone," she said, "9,000 one-legged men have become advantageously engaged to marry. Take good note, there is no calculation in this choice. Pity and gratitude—which are akin to love—make girls and widows with good incomes compete for the honor of looking out for them through life. I'm not sure they are making a bad bargain—there is going to be an awful scarcity of men."

Diana spoke of adoptions.

"I know five French moneyed families who have lost their young men—sons and nephews," she said. "Four of them have adopted for the war, as they call it, one or more young fighters from the front. It is a great and pious movement. Paris newspapers solicit names of suitable officers and men who have no families, or whose families cannot send them comforts. Frequently their superiors are the intermediaries. And the newspapers, by private letter, hand over the young heroes to applying families."

Some one said they were not real adoptions.

"Wait and see after the war," replied the Grande dame. "At present, they write to the adopted ones, whom they have never seen, almost as if they

were their sons or nephews or cousins. Later, when they meet, all will depend. Even rough young men—war is a great refiner—rough young fellows, taken up, appreciated, may well show true gold. These family fortunes cry aloud for men. The adopting families always have daughters or nieces, to be married, directed, protected."

The scramble is so glorified by pure

the style becomes correct and limpid, the descriptions gay and precise, the story flowing, the handwriting itself refined. It is no illusion. When he comes back, the godson will be quite another man."

When he comes—if he comes!

In France the best of twenty years (class 1915) are the youngest actually fighting. Those of nineteen years old



"I WROTE MY SOLDIER: 'GOD BLESS YOU! I EMBRACE YOU.'" Most celebrated of the "godmother" pictures at this moment in Europe. Composition by a Geneva photographer, winning newspaper prizes in Paris and Lausanne, and copied in Germany.

patriotism that none dream of criticising the rush of girl godmothers into letter writing. The papers are full of touching examples. "How beautifully does this frightful war re-educate the simple!" exclaims the French page of the Paris Herald. "A godmother has shown us letters received from her godson at the front. The first missives were short, awkward, nearly illegible. Then, day by day,

Park, momentarily dismantled, pours out old soldiers, with real guns, real officers, on long marches. In the fields outside Paris they dig trenches. They are straight, vigorous and already broad-shouldered by the military preparation movement of which the Boy Scouts are the beginning."

"You see," said the titled American, "they are the future husbands of little girls who are today twelve, thirteen and fourteen years old. Even their chance of marriage is threatened."

It is the same in Germany and Austria.

Germany already proposes, after the war, to import young men, in mass.

I was shown another clipping.

I read:

"Frankfurt (Zeitung), May 10.—After the thirty years' war, as on similar crises during the renaissance and middle ages when a dearth of men threatened marriage and the future of the nation, the government of Germany has made honorable and meritorious. As the modern family cannot have recourse to such devices, there remains only the importation of educated bridegrooms of good German stock, from North and South America, and other lands of previous German emigration."

The French, who have no hyphenated sons abroad, must call on plain Americans.

As for the young Americans already in France—physicians, engineers, specialists, hospital aids, volunteer soldiers and professional and commercial men in general—the matchmakers are already busy with them.

"A young fellow of good western European family—thirty years old, married during the war, has a son, Alfred—displeased his father by enlisting—and then pleased him by getting promoted lieutenant, told the titled American. "Cited in the order of the army, he recently enjoyed short leave in Paris, and made a few visits to please his mother. He is on the point of being called on."

"If he don't look out of getting incumbered with a great south of France estate and a sweet girl in the bargain. The fun of it is that he don't dream of the extent of her fortune—and the French family doesn't know that he is rich at all!"

The nurse told of an embassy clerk (there are fifty such, now, in our Paris embassy), who is engaged to be married to a third interest in one of the Lyons silk factories.

"That American boy, just out of college, started to work his way around the world," she says, "and he got stranded in Paris just before the war. He won a few boxing matches, and, during a week, carried an advertising sign. When the war broke out, he went with the American Hospital ambulance, where he stayed six months and learned French. When he got into the embassy the matchmakers fell on him."

All of which is the more remarkable

because, up to now, American men have married only the daughters of girls, our rich ones only. This is time's revenge for the American boy.

The matchmakers are busy, and the early risers, not dissipated, who can learn to manage an estate or help to run a business, are in demand. A good business and bonds require good brain and principles. The parents of brotherless French girls are worried sick about it.

France is the land of such cozy fortunes.

Indeed, there is even talk of a governmental marriage bureau, to be patronized by the authorities on both sides of the Atlantic. Its work will be to seek out and investigate our youthful Barkises and pay their trips to France for introductions.

But what if Barkis won't consent to live in Europe?

Tut, tut! It's a good chance. Think about it! STERLING HEILIG.

Rumania's Queen Is Subdued.

Even participation in the war has not halted all frivolities the great struggle has had its inevitable effects. In normal times no capital of Europe is more gay than Bucharest, which the natives delight to call the "Paris of the Balkans." And in all matters contributing to the gaiety of the little Balkan metropolis the present Queen of Rumania, Queen Marie, is the center.

At the present moment, however, Rumania, and especially Bucharest, is strangely subdued and its queen is busy herself in the organization of Red Cross societies in anticipation of the active intervention of her country in the war.

Rumania, like all the other Balkan states, has been a victim of European statesmen. There was a time when the Russian troops were pressing forward into the Balkans and the Bank of England was advancing Rumania a loan of \$25,000,000, when the help of this small but important state seemed assured. The queen is a daughter of the late Duke of Edinburgh and a first cousin of King George and the czar.

It is unsafe, however, especially in the Balkans, to count on relationship to accomplish what diplomacy and liberal compensation cannot.

Too Late.

SENATOR KENTON, congratulated at a June wedding in Fort Dodge on his eloquence, smiled and said: "Well, let us admit frankly that the gift of the gab is, after all, a good thing."

"For my part, I have never found silence golden except at a wedding or a funeral—when it's too late to say anything."



"ONLY LITTLE SISTER HAS A NORMAL CHANCE TO WED." The Boy Scout movement (aged twelve to sixteen) is the oldest scout to grow up latest in Europe. Paris picture, with prize offered for best title.